



News Release

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Cut water use, North Beach officials tell Pacific County system's customers *Long Beach Peninsula problem shows importance of checking vacation homes after freeze*

OLYMPIA — North Beach Water District officials issued a water conservation notice today to the system's customers. The district serves about 2,700 connections at Ocean Park on Pacific County's Long Beach Peninsula. It may soon run critically low on water because of multiple breaks in frozen service lines. Conservation measures are needed immediately to assure that customers' water demands can be met.

North Beach's situation illustrates a concern for many who have recreational or second homes that were unoccupied during extreme low temperatures that hit Washington earlier this month. Broken lines can lead to water damage that can be expensive for the homeowner. Breaks and leaks can also cause problems for water purveyors who are having difficulty maintaining service for their customers.

"People should be aware that we could face a water shortage," said the North Beach district's Michael Berlien, "and reduce their water usage accordingly. Shorter, less frequent showers and fewer flushes will help until our reservoirs, wells and water treatment plant are restored."

The system hasn't been able to locate and repair all of the leaks. It's now losing water faster than it can replenish the supply.

Many residences weren't occupied during the recent cold snap and when the thawing began, the district couldn't keep up with the water demands. About half of the district's customers don't continually occupy their houses in the winter, so if lines are broken and people don't know it the water will keep running. That may cause lowering of reservoir levels to a critical point.

The district has notified its customers to conserve water as much as possible until broken lines can be found and fixed. However, the district is concerned that homeowners who are out of the area won't get the notice. It's very difficult to find all the leaks and repair them unless the customers report their line breaks.

The incident is a reminder that people who have a second residence that was unoccupied during the recent freeze should check to see if pipes broke and water leaked. The main valve to the building should be turned off immediately to prevent further leakage and the damage it can cause. Repairs can be made later.

People who can't personally check the residence should contact someone who lives near the home and ask that person to check it out. Many recreational homes on the beaches, lakes, rivers, mountains and other locales of the state may have been affected by the freezing period. It's particularly important to check if the home is served by a water utility that could have trouble keeping up with water demands because of excessive leakage.

North Beach's water is safe to use. There just isn't enough of it.

"Until further notice, tap water remains safe for drinking, bathing and brushing teeth," added Teresa Walker, the Department of Health engineer assisting North Beach. "Assuring safe drinking water is our highest priority, and we're working with system officials to achieve that goal. We'll monitor the system's water quality and work with them to notify customers if the situation changes."

Customers are also advised to be careful how they use any unapproved sources of water that are available on their property. This includes agricultural wells or streams. Such water should not be used for drinking, cooking or brushing teeth.

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